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A Field Day for the Heat

The heat in LA was oppressive: both the broiling sun and the omnipresent cops. The combined effect saturated the streets, but didn't quell the protests mounted over four days and nights at the Democratic National Convention. If the tenor of the demonstrations in LA didn't match the fury of Seattle, that was almost certainly part of the plan "This week was about issues," said John Sellers, the head of the Ruckus Society, who had only days earlier been released from jail following his bizarre arrest and confinement in Philadelphia.

Sellers, an exuberant organizer, had been nabbed off a street corner by Philly cops, stuck in jail on a slate of novel charges, and hit with a \$1 million bail. The transparent intent was to keep the maestro of Seattle from heading West and orchestrating havoc in LA. Sellers' attorneys got the bail reduced and their client freed. "It's not about broken shop windows", says Sellers. "What we've seen over the past 8 months is thousands of people jailed for bearing witness to the takeover of our democracy."

There was a crazy coherence and palpable message to most of the two dozen rallies and marches that flooded downtown LA over the course of the week. On Saturday evening PETA dumped a load of hog manure in front of a hotel to protest factory farming. Sunday afternoon saw a rowdy march against the death penalty. Tuesday brought the largest mass arrest, when the police bore down on a Critical Mass bicycle rally. Later that evening hundreds gathered to protest sanctions against Iraq. Wednesday attention turned to the police, with a rally and civil disobedience action at the notorious Ramparts division of the LAPD. The same day gay and lesbian protesters staged one of the most creative acts, a mass "kiss in".

Political conventions these days are mainly about image making and fundraising, not the rough-and-tumble politics and plat-

form spats that used to be the stuff of these gatherings. So it was fitting that the first big protest of the week came together on the beach at Santa Monica, beneath the pier, which the DNC had rented for a fundraiser on the eve of the convention honoring Democratic fatcats and corporate contributors, including executives from Raytheon, Arco, Disney and Chevron. The pier was protected by a legion of cops, many of them on horseback. Women in formal gowns tiptoed around horse dung. More than a thousand protesters showed up, including Doris "Granny D" Haddock, the 90-year-old political activist, who had walked across the nation last year promoting the cause of campaign finance reform. Haddock harassed the underwriters of the Democrats, urging them to come down and mingle with the people and then turned to the crowd and said, "Waste your vote! Vote your heart! Be a strategic, long-term voter! You will shape the America and the world of tomorrow. It is your responsibility to do so."

Early Monday morning about two thousand environmentalists and human rights activists mustered in Pershing Square in downtown LA to support the cause of the U'wa Indians of the Colombian rainforests, whose land is being overrun by Occidental Petroleum. Occidental is a company with deep historical ties to the Gore family. Its founder, the tycoon Armand Hammer, was Albert Gore Sr.'s top political patron and when he lost his senate seat in 1970, Hammer put Gore on the Oxy board of directors and made him CEO of the company's coal mining subsidiary. Hammer also invested in Al, giving him money for his early congressional and senate runs and loaning him his private jet. Gore now controls between \$500,000 and \$1 million worth of Oxy stock and despite his professed environmentalism

(Heat continued on page 7)

Our Little Secrets

THE NEW PRUDERY

To prepare CounterPunch spiritually for the New Prudery, in the form of Gore and Lieberman's attack on Hollywood's debasement of the higher values, we drove to the Getty Center, perched above Interstate 405, in search of cultural filth from earlier epochs. After all, if Gore and Lieberman are going to get serious about moral cleansing, why stop with South Park when the museums are filled with porn and violence? Sure enough, we was hardly inside the Getty Center's gallery of classical antiquities before we were confronted by an amphora depicting satyrs all set to rape a passel of wood nymphs. We can't imagine Senator Lieberman approving that kind of thing, any more than a pretty explicit rendition of bestiality on an adjacent vase, with Leda making half-hearted efforts to repel the swan.

Aside from doing a pre-board for Liebermanism, we were excited to get to the new Getty Center designed by Richard Meier and now advertised as one of the glories of American architecture. One certainly couldn't hope for a more sensational site, perched up above

the 405 interstate, with the San Gabriels to the north, Babylon/Hollywood away to the east and the Pacific the other way. Meier set off in the right direction, with some buildings faced with blocks of rough-surfaced travertine limestone, designed to look like hill fortresses in Italy or North Africa. But this medieval look is shackled to banal modern surfaces, so the end product is an uninspiring blend of airport/Hyatt modernism, with the travertine blocks looking like a set left behind by Cecil B. DeMille.

The galleries are rather dingily lit in the modern manner. Lieberman would have felt uncomfortable. Here was Jan Steen's "Bathsheba After the Bath", featuring a slutty girl eagerly preparing for her first interview with King David. Here too Theodore Gericault's Three Lovers, an altogether approving portrayal of two girls and a fellow in bed, blissfully ignorant of the Gore-Lieberman menace to their pleasures only 180 years over the horizon. Even the 18th century English gallery contained intimations of immoral conduct, with Peter Lely's hot portrait of Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth and mistress to Charles II. Across the room is Gainsborough's amiable portrait of his friend James Christie, founder of the auction house. This was one of Getty's earlier purchases and also one of his best. How Christie would have laughed at all the fakes palmed off on the oil man in the middle decades of this century.

The impresarios of both the Democratic and Republican National Committees would do well to visit the Getty Center and study how they stage-managed big events in the old days. Luca Carlevarij's did a couple of paintings of Venetian regattas, one of them with the doge marrying the city to the Adriatic. How nice it would have been to have had Bill landing in a Venetian barge at Santa Monica pier, marrying his party to Hollywood by symbolically tossing into the polluted waters a copy of the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996, etched in gold, before repairing to the lovely home of Barbra Streisand, he dressed as Belshazzar and she as Vashti who, CounterPunchers will recall, declined to

attend Ahasuerus's revels, thus paving the way for Esther and, ultimately for Joe Lieberman.

A HEARTBEAT AWAY

In 1988 incumbent Senator Lowell Weicker, a maverick liberal Republican, was up for reelection, and his Democratic challenger was State Attorney General Joe Lieberman. Lieberman ran against Weicker from the right. William F. Buckley (a Connecticut resident) endorsed Lieberman and stumped to get out the right-wing vote for him. So did most of the Republicans in the Connecticut legislature. One telling moment of the campaign was a televised debate, in which Lieberman (his campaign partly by the late Jorge Mas Canosa's Cuban-American Foundation) attacked Weicker for the latter's support for lifting the embargo and reopening diplomatic relations with Cuba. Lieberman said to Weicker, "You're closer to Fidel Castro than you are to Ronald Reagan."

Connecticut is well known for its hospitality to the insurance, aerospace, and arms industries. Few press accounts have evoked Lieberman's obsequiousness to these corporate powers that underwrite his campaigns. The insurance industry didn't like the Clinton health plan of 1993 and neither did Lieberman. The insurance industry wanted limits set on damages in product liability suits. Lieberman was one of only four Democratic senators to agree.

Potent in the political economy of Connecticut are Pratt & Whitney, United Technologies and Sikorsky. Senator Lieberman has duly been a mighty promoter of the Black Hawk helicopter, the Comanche, the Joint Strike Fighter, the F-22, the C-17 transport and the nuclear subs necessary to beat off the armadas of North Korea. He's similarly been a fierce supporter of NATO expansion in eastern Europe, meaning that Poland, Hungary and Czechslovakia have to buy arms from these same corporations, with Uncle Sam guaranteeing the tab.

Everything turned out okay for the Democrats in the end. Al Gore got his post-convention bounce in the polls. Hollywood unbelted millions for the Democratic National Committee. Bill Clinton raised more millions for his library and HRC for her senate race. But

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Gore's poll-driven rhetoric had the same relationship to populism as water to Chateau Lafite.

mostly it was an opportunity for the LAPD to show what life will be like in the police state just around the corner.

One time, walking along a sidewalk opposite the Staples Center we could hear the roar of motorcycles and an instant later saw an elderly woman scuttling away from the center of the sidewalk, just in time to avoid the first of some forty motorcycle cops, two abreast, hurtling along this crowded pedestrian alley at some 40 miles an hour, horns blaring. No demonstration was in progress at the time. It was purely a cop statement from the unformed and helmeted bikers, "We rule."

There's no moral presence so piquant as that of a confessed sinner, particularly one with no contrition. It was fun to watch Bill Clinton doing his "History will absolve me" routine in Los Angeles. The delegates rose to him and our only sadness was that Monica, America's most charming Other Woman, was not there to take the ovation she deserves.

Without Monica, remember, we would have just lived through one of the most tedious presidential second terms in history, colored only by the bombing of the Serbs, the starving of Iraqi children and the tumult of the NASDAQ. With a single snap of her thong, Monica mothered Hillary's New York candidacy, the outmaneuvering of the Republican right, the prolonged ebullience of the stock market, the chance for Al Gore to sell himself as his Own (Family) Man, with another Family Man as his partner.

Tuesday night was "last hurrah" time for the liberal icons of the Democratic Party - Kennedys and Jacksons. CounterPunch co-editor Cockburn spent it in the Shadow Convention organized by Arianna Huffington, part of a "Rapid Response" team whose function was to watch the speeches on tv and then comment upon them in amusing terms for the benefit of the packed audience in Patriot Hall, seven blocks south along Figueroa from the Staples Center. Co-analysts included Paul Krassner, Tommy Smothers, a man from Time magazine and Al Franken.

Cockburn didn't care much for

Franken and the antipathy was evidently mutual. Franken's an ardent supporter of Al Gore. In this undignified posture it's hard to be a comedian and Franken didn't meet the challenge. After Cockburn made a few disobliging comments about the Clinton-Gore record the Time man glared from the other end of the panel and said something to effect that "In other words, everyone else is wrong and you're right" - an unusually accurate statement from an employee of the Time-Warner company.

ALL ALONG THE WATTS TOWERS

CounterPunch passed up the Convention one afternoon in favor of a trip to Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, now in the final months of a prolonged rehab program. The five towers, two of them soaring a hundred feet into the air over the poverty of the Watts ghetto in south-central Los Angeles, are as glorious as ever. We'd never fully appreciated that one of the main railroad commuter lines from Long Beach to downtown LA ran along the west side of Rodia's property line and that therefore in the thirty-four years that Rodia worked on his towers between 1921 and 1955 his was most certainly one of the best attended artistic projects in our history. Day after day thousands of commuters saw this tiny man toiling on his great work, often perched 90 feet above the ground wiring the iron struts together or applying mortar and broken china.

These days the railroad has gone, as have the trolley cars, and the motorists on the Century and Harbor freeways can't see the Towers. If Rodia started a similar project today he wouldn't get higher than ten feet off the ground before the Building Department hit him with a demolition order. As things are it was a close shave for the Watts towers back in 1959 when the Building and Safety Department declared them to be unsafe structures. By now Rodia had moved to northern California and his house had been burned to the ground by vandals. When Kenneth Ross, general manager of the Department of Municipi-

pal Arts asked the heads of the Building Department what they would do with the Leaning Tower of Pisa if it was located in LA the bureaucrats answered without hesitation that they would declare them to be unsafe and recommend their demolition.

But the bureaucrats were outmaneuvered. Defenders of the Towers organized a load test, in which a winch truck applied 10,000 pound pull on the Towers and succeeded only in bending its own equipment. Amid the cheers of the crowd the head of the Building and Safety Department handed over the red "unsafe" sign to the Defenders. The innate engineering skills of the Italian immigrant had triumphed.

If the Democratic liberals inhabiting the Staples Center, had any sense of drama or history they would have held their own convention in some abandoned lot within eyesight of the Watts Towers. That would have been a declaration of faith in the human spirit. But they sat in the Staples Center and listened to Al Gore, giving his dull imitation of Bill Clinton's State of the Union addresses as devised by Dick Morris. Gore trudged his way through the laundry list of items designed to appeal to the middle class, and scored big. The joke came when the commentators termed this a "populist" oration. Gore's poll-driven rhetoric had the same relationship to populism as water to Chateau Lafite.

TIPPER'S CAMPAIGN DIARY

"And then he crushed me in his arms. It seemed madness to yield to the torrent of impulses within me, but at long last there were no doubts, no uncertainties. Now blind instinct could take charge. My lips were ripe and rich and ready, and I knew the breasts I crushed against him were hillocks of sweetness. Our kiss seemed to last for all eternity, and it was only with infinite regret that I murmured amidst our mounting passion, "No, Albert, we mustn't." "Why not?" he murmured hoarsely, and I could feel the fever of need within him. Oblivious of the immense crowd, of the vast national audience, we..." To Be Continued. CP

"Magical Thinking" and Campaign 2000

What Nader Represents

BY EDWARD SAID

The Republican and Democratic conventions are now over with no new surprises or revelations to record. George W. Bush and Albert Gore received their parties' endorsement and the two are now touring the country with their vice-presidential partners, in pursuit of votes. During the last election in 1996 only 39 per cent of the eligible voters of this country actually voted (100 million people did not), and there is every reason to suppose that the figure this year will not be significantly higher. In effect, the choice between Gore and Bush exists but is a relatively trivial and uninteresting one: both are comfortable with the current system (Gore says he will reform campaign financing, but then so too does Bush, in a different way), both are committed to increasing defense spending, both are supporters of the social security system although Bush wants to privatize it, and both are loyalists when it comes to the dominance of the corporations. True, Bush is against abortion and Gore is for it, and true, Bush wants to cut taxes for the wealthy, whereas Gore does not, not immediately anyway. Yet the matters that really unite them and which each is trying to accuse the other of having taken from the competing party are more significant.

Both men promise to cut the size and cost of government still more. This means in effect that the poor, the disadvantaged, the minorities will have less support from the state than they do even now, that is, after Clinton's neo-liberalism cut federally funded welfare programs virtually to nothing. This is a major setback to the goal of a progressive, humane society. When one considers that an increase in military spending is going to further swell a "defense" budget already several times greater than all the rest of the world's military expenditures combined, then one has an idea of how distorted are the priorities here.

Millions of people are uninsured and therefore forgo health care, must make

do with sub-standard housing, schooling, and no protection from the corporations (this is, after all, a largely unregulated market), and have no say whatever concerning the misuse of the environment. Neither the Bush nor the Gore platforms address those concerns at all. Both men emphasize their commitment to law and order (Bush is opposed to gun control, Gore is vague) which to the poor, the ghetto dwellers, to say nothing of the African-American minority means more police brutality, more of a blind law enforcement ideology, and a great increase in the prison population, already the largest in the world per capita. Bush and Gore are zealous for capital punishment. Bush and Gore advocate stiffer rules for immigration and a generally conservative

day is Martin Peretz, the owner of The New Republic, bought by him with his wife's money about 25 years ago and transformed from a liberal weekly into a mouthpiece for the Israeli embassy (a claim made by the magazine itself in its own advertising). No one in American journalism is a more unabashed hater of Arabs and Muslims, none more insulting, none more intransigent, none more reckless and ignorant. Peretz has been referred to several times as very important in the Gore campaign, and the thought that he would play either an open or behind-the-scenes role in a Gore presidency ought to send shivers up the spine of any fair-minded citizen. It is not only that he is a rabid Zionist, but that he outflanks Labour Zionists from the right, all of it with the hypocrisy of the rank cow-

The universal emphasis on "faith" in both conventions is a stark reminder of how dangerous and necessarily invidious "faith" can be in a secular democracy.

policy when it comes to foreign affairs. In both campaigns there is righteous discussion of "rogue states" and the need for unremitting campaigns against "terrorism" (i.e. Islam), as if the US itself were not in fact the most dangerous rogue state in the world today.

As far as the Middle East is concerned of course both parties seek to outdo each other in support for Israel, as well as endorsing such overseas (covert and overt) intervention as was enacted in Kosovo, Iraq, Central America, parts of Asia, and Africa. Dick Cheney, for instance, opposed sanctions against apartheid South Africa and was opposed to the ANC, which he considered merely a "terrorist" group. Joseph Lieberman was the first Democrat to vote for the Gulf War and is a fanatic pro-Israeli.

But so too is Gore, whose Harvard teacher and one of his main advisers to-

ard who advocates policies for Israel that, if carried out, would commit Israelis to their defense while he, sitting in the comfort of his millions in Washington and Boston, would remain protected. Of him it is not an understatement to say that he represents the worst in Zionism and in aggressive Americanism, a disaster for both peoples.

Senator Lieberman's record on the right-wing of the Democratic party speaks for itself. Like Bush and Gore, Lieberman makes no secret of his willingness to bring "faith" into politics, this in a constitutional system based explicitly on secularism, that is, the total separation of church and state. Aside from its unconstitutional flavour, the universal emphases on "faith" in both conventions is a stark reminder to non-Christians and non-Jews in this country, Muslims especially (who outnumber Jews in America today), of how dangerous and

necessarily invidious "faith" can be in a secular democracy. This is one aspect of the underlying recklessness of the presidential campaign, with both parties vying for the same right-of-centre "inclusive" vote, with its fiscal conservatism, its anti-state rhetoric, its law-and-order ideology, its xenophobic anti-immigration mentality, and its brazenly imperialist posture toward the rest of the world (the non-white world in particular). Anyone looking at these two spoiled dauphins of the American political class should marvel that an enormously well-endowed country like the United States could have thrown up two such mediocrities as candidates.

I have heard it said that Arab-Americans are so disgusted with Gore and Lieberman's positions on the Middle East that they are advocating Bush and the dinosaur-like Cheney as their preferred candidates. That would be a serious mistake, because in Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate, there is an individual who is much better suited to be president than either of the two main ones who, very much like their Arab counterparts, are where they are by inheritance and a huge amount of money rather than real merit. (There is considerable irony to the claim made like mimicking parrots by Bush and Gore that campaign financing needs reform, as if either could have been a candidate without the grossest abuse of the campaign rules that now exist).

Nader has been appallingly mistreated by the American media. No other candidate has so bravely tackled the glaring inequities in American society, from the corporate greed that has robbed the people of their sovereign control of health, the air waves, the environment, the market and the future, to the whole issue of the destiny of the working people whose belief in "the American dream" has cost them so dearly. Voter apathy is caused by people tired and made indifferent by the same old refrain about prosperity (the country is going through good times economically, but good times for certain sectors, more poverty for others) while their share of the budget surplus is swallowed up by the defense budget and the corporations. Nader is right to say that the poor are getting poorer, and right to say that governmental protection for the citizen is growing more and more minimal.

It is not just a matter of whether or not he wins; it is rather that being recognized as a danger to the American status quo is a certain forerunner of the change occurring.

Because of his history as the world's first consumer advocate, Nader has acquired an encyclopaedic knowledge of the country's laws (and is a lawyer himself) and has for almost forty years stood up to the rapacity and dishonesty of big business and a government more or less controlled by those interests. I can do no better than to quote him here, talking to Lewis Lapham, editor of Harper's magazine:

"Unlike Gore and Bush I don't promote myself as a solution to the nation's problems. The idea is to encourage a lot of other people to use the tools of democratic government to take control of the assets they hold in common — the public lands, the public broadcast frequencies, the public money. Whatever your issue, whether it's racism, homophobia, taxes, health care, urban decay, you're not going to go anywhere with it unless you focus on the concentration of power. We have an overdeveloped plutocracy and an underdeveloped democracy, too many private interests commandeering the public interest for their own profit. Most Americans don't realise how badly they are being harmed by the unchecked commercialisation of what belongs to the commonwealth. If enough people knew what questions to ask, we have both the ways and means to achieve better schools, a healthier environment, a more general distribution of decent health care."

Nader, it is obvious, provokes fear in the other candidates' hearts, as much for his honesty as for his proven ability to make changes exactly where and when no one thought them possible. His personal life is austere to a fault, and his campaign - to which I am happy to have contributed and urge others to do the same - is basically run by volunteers, not by big money people and their servants. In all, he is a formidable presence in American life. As Nader says, It is not

just a matter of whether or not he wins; it is rather that being recognized as a danger to the American status quo is a certain forerunner of the change occurring. This has been true in all the major shifts in American public life, from the women's rights movement, the revolt against eastern banks, to the trades-union movement. None of those changes ever came from the system, but as a challenge to it.

The curious thing is that though of Lebanese parentage, Nader has never made himself part of any Arab or Arab-American campaign, even during the days of James Abourezk in the 70s, at a time when Jim was the only prominent Arab-American in public life. My guess is that Nader has thought that being seen as an Arab advocate would have harmed him in his consumer work. Nader has said in a CNN interview that he would cut off all aid to Israel and immediately end the sanctions on Iraq, but even now, despite those two campaign pledges about Israel and Iraq, he does not devote much time to foreign policy. What he wants is more important: to allow citizens to see that only a shift from outside the two party system can help matters. "When people tell me", he says, "that I'm wrecking the two-party system, I ask them what's left to wreck?"

I wrote recently of "magical thinking", the kind of logic that suggests that change can occur miraculously or by sudden divine intervention, whereas it is the case that all change is possible principally by hard work, a thorough knowledge of the system, and by mass mobilization. This, in the American context, is just what Ralph Nader represents. He is a lesson to be learned by Arabs and Americans who are at the end of their patience with the monopoly on power held by dynasties, oligarchies and - just as crucial - an ideology of magical, passive thought. CP

Fizzle or Sizzle?

Protesters and the Press

BY LAURA FLANDERS

Stifle a live tv broadcast and antagonize a load of celebrity pundits; unleash a torrent of rubber bullets, batons and pepper spray on retreating protestors and the press? The over-reaction by Chief Bernard Park's force on the first night of the DNC party in Los Angeles August 16 may have looked like an odd way for the scandal-ridden department to reassert its competence. In fact, it accomplished two things: it made sure, as the LAPD and Mayor Riordan had planned from the start, that protestors and Party folks would never come close, or meet. It also established "violence" and "melee" as the media's tropes of the week. In short, the police riot worked a treat.

"Smothered by police, straggling through smog and heat, the protest movement that exploded late last year on the rainy streets of Seattle fizzled out here last week," the Washington Post proclaimed. Overwhelming police power "seemed to wear down or distract the protest organizers"; that, and a few "extremists" out "to tear the state down." Oh yes, and there was the movement's own fogginess. The Post's post-mortem went on: "The sheer diversity of protest issues on display muddled the movement's message." Let's see... Several thousand social change activists converge on the Party conventions, where private bankrolling of public politicians is at its most obvious and intense. To kick off the week, several protestors unfurl a banner directly across from the DNC convention center: a US flag with corporate logos instead of stars and the words "Soldout USA". Pretty muddled stuff.

A day or two later, on the Santa Monica pier, picketers surround a booze-up funded by defense contractor Raytheon and Philip Morris to benefit a party that moralized for months about how its convention was not going to accept another cancerous tobacco cent. Members of the same D2K Coalition — the assembly of groups come together to protest the Democrats — joined striking workers outside a Loews Hotel, where low-wage employees are in fierce combat with management and a CEO who's a major contributor to Al Gore for President. En route, at a nearby clothing store, "Gaptivistas" distributed flyers asking "What is GAP Chairman Donald Fisher's favorite hobby?" The

answer: "Buying politicians." It takes concerted effort to miss a message this plain. The week progressed with one demonstration after another targetting corporate dominance of civic life, from unlivable wages, to sweatshops, pollution, the under-resourcing of schools and the mass incarceration of a captive labor force. Unlike Seattle, D2K set out to make a statement, not shut down a lot of city streets. The same press who condemned Philadelphia protestors for fouling up traffic and "alienating local people" seemed disappointed. And whereas activists who boil their meaning down to a slogan ("Human need not corporate greed,") got criticized for being "superficial", most reporters resolutely ignored the efforts activists made to lay out their arguments.

As in Philadelphia, LA activists did not just carry placards, they ran a veritable message machine. The Independent Media Center, set up conveniently close to the convention site, packaged "message" in every

ing off a parking lot behind Patriotic Hall, home of the IMC and the Shadow Convention. The move barred access to the IMC's satellite truck just long enough to make it impossible to beam programming during the time-slot the media folks had leased. One member of the county sheriff's department admitted he was sure the "threat would evaporate as soon as the satellite time elapsed," and lo, that came to pass. A day later, the LAPD called the producers of the IMC broadcasts — among them, Brian Drolet of Boulder-based Freespeech TV. "They begged us to remove the sign we'd put on our internet site, explaining that the LAPD had prevented the broadcast. Thousands of calls were coming in to their office they said, and callers had jammed up their lines."

The IMC shut down was just one example of the chaos ruling relations between the county, state and city cops. The big news shouldn't have been that there was violence, but rather that there was so little of it. Wednesday's rag-tag youth march had to walk through a gantlet of several thousand riot police — the real Black Block — who lined the streets several deep. More than once, police tried violently to break up the

You want foggy thinking? Try talking to DNC delegates. Three out of five explained they're for Gore because "he'll oppose Big Oil".

medium: radio, print, web, satellite and cable tv. Genuinely curious reporters could have taken their pick. The IMC folks broadcast nightly, live, to a potential audience in 21 million homes via Direct TV, the Dish Network's Channel 9415 and on 43 public access cable stations nationwide (as well as live on the web.) Grassroots camcorder activists from groups like CHIRLA, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in LA, or the local "People Against Racist Terror" or Families Against Three Strikes, collaborated with experienced alternative media people like Deedee Halleck of Deep Dish TV or Judith LeBlanc of Changing America, to trace convention contributions from globally-expanding corporations to the de-industrialization of the US economy and the incarceration of displaced workers...nightly, on tv.

Or almost nightly. Just half an hour before the Los Angeles Independent Media Center was to go live, with its first evening show of the week, those of us involved were stopped in our tracks. City police responded to an alleged anarchist bomb-threat by seal-

procession, divide leaders from followers, legal observers from their clients. At the end of the miraculously arrest-free day, young organizers relaxed uptown at their Convergence Center HQ. Cop cars and choppers buzzed around, finally arresting two stragglers for jay-walking. "It's so frustrating," complained one tired, blond high school activist, "All the trouble they cause, distracts from the issues."

You want foggy thinking? Try talking to DNC delegates. Three out of five when questioned explained they're for Gore because "he'll oppose Big Oil". Asked about Occidental Petroleum, only one had even heard of Al's messy ties. It was the delegates, not the protestors who were hazy on the issues and cavalier about the use of force. What they had in common was focus: Delegates and demonstrators were clearly focussed on the money trail—one with palms outstretched, the other clenched fists. "In LA a movement Fizzles Out" headlined the Washington Post (August 20.) Hardly. CP

(Heat continued from page 1)
and concern for indigenous peoples he has refused to speak out against the oil company's assault on the U'wa tribe. U'wa leaders, who have traveled to the US several times in the last few years, were supposed to have spoken at the rally, but at the last minute the State Department denied the tribe a visa.

Danny Kennedy, head of Project Underground, the Berkeley-based group that organizes on oil and mining issues, excoriated Gore and Lieberman for having the effrontery to portray themselves as populists while attacking Bush and Cheney as the "oil ticket". "Gore's ties to big oil are just as deep and filthy as Bush or Cheney's and he has done their bidding for the past 8 years," Kennedy said. Kennedy also denounced the recent congressional approval of Clinton and Gore's \$2 billion drug war package for Colombia. "The drug war is a ruse, nothing more than a way to get military supplies and advisers into Colombia to protect the interests of the oil companies." Kennedy noted that Lieberman has consistently carried water for Sikorski Corporation, the firm that makes the Black Hawk helicopters that are now slated for delivery to the Colombian military.

One of the few union leaders to speak out at the protests was Dave Campbell of the Oil and Chemical Workers, who lambasted Oxy's anti-labor record at its Long Beach refinery. Campbell also pointed out that Oxy owns a major interest in IBP, the huge meatpacking plant notorious for its monopolistic practices and shoddy working conditions.

Even the anarchists were on their best behavior. The dreaded Black Bloc marched arm-in-arm down the street, some of them actually singing songs. Of course, the attire of the street warriors made them easy targets for the LAPD riot squads, who shadowed their every step, often outnumbering them by 5 to 1. On occasion the cops seemed to mistake the anarchists for representatives of the Zapatista rebels, dressed in their traditional black clothes and ski masks. But the prospect of harassing Mayans instead of young white anarchists didn't seem make much of a difference to the cops. Overhead, eight helicopters buzzed around LA's glossy skyscrapers, battling for the best view of the scene unfolding below.

As the march approached the Staples Center, one affinity group of about 12 people, mainly women, stayed behind and tried to temporarily block an intersection by sit-

Even the anarchists were on their best behavior, marching arm-in-arm down the street and singing songs.

ting down in the street and linking their arms. A burly sergeant for the LAPD approached and yelled at the 12 protesters: "Get your asses up and get back, now. If you don't, you sure as hell know what's going to happen." After a few minutes, the group moved back, slowly. But it happened anyway. Unprovoked, a wedge of cops, dressed in their black ninja gear, darted forward to attack the group, batons pounding away at the backs and legs of the demonstrators. One woman fell to the pavement and hit her head on the curb, opening a deep gash above her eye. An attendant at a nearby shop rushed into the street, pulled the woman inside his store and tended her wound. "I was only doing what they ordered me to do," said Valerie Lyons, an Indian rights activists who had traveled to LA from Minot, South Dakota. "Then they whacked me hard in the back of the knee twice and I just collapsed."

Later that evening, while Clinton delivered his own political eulogy, Rage Against the Machine played a raucous set for about 15,000 demonstrators outside the Staples center in the "legal protest zone", a parking lot cordoned off by an eight foot tall fence topped with concertina wire. As part of the preparation for the convention, the LA Department of Public Works had deforested much of the Staples Center grounds, uprooting about 100 trees and shrubs. The convention planners argued that the trees might be used as weapons against the police or demonstrators.

Soon after Rage finished a couple of young protesters climbed the fence near the Staples center, waving an anarchist flag and taunting the police. The LAPD used this as a pretext to give an order for the crowd to disperse and cut the power to the stage. The crowd booed but began to amble out of the fenced-in lot. Then the cops began showering the fence line with pepper spray, trying, so they claimed, to get the anarchists off the fence. A few bottles and chunks of concrete were tossed back, falling far short of the cops and then all hell broke loose.

About a hundred cops on horseback drove into the crowd trampling more than a dozen people. Behind them about 500 cops carrying guns began to strafe the crowd, firing for more than 45 minutes. "We were moving out, doing exactly what they said

and they still shot us," says Ramon Martinez, a farmworker organizer from Stockton, who was hit four times in the neck and shoulders with rubber bullets. Martinez said that the exit route out of the protest area was blocked by a line of police firing guns, thus the crowd was forced to huddle in the intersection of Figueroa and 11th street as the bullets flew.

On Wednesday, the protests turned on the police, highlighting the LAPD's reign of terror. Several thousand marchers gathered at MacArthur Park early in the morning and walked through the 95 degree heat to the infamous Ramparts division headquarters, the current symbol for the systematic brutality and corruption of the LAPD.

It was an odd scene. The Ramparts division building was wrapped in a blue sheet of plastic, as if Christo had stopped by in a somber mood. There's an ATM sign above the steps of the building. "They put that cash machine in there to suggest that it's the only safe place to withdraw money around here," a resident explained. "What happens when you leave the building? They don't say shit about that."

The protest itself was as orchestrated as a ballet, every detail worked out in advance

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with the cops, with officials from the Justice Department looking on in a mock display of oversight. Of course, the Ramparts cops were on their best behavior, scrupulously adhering to every constitutional right as they read the 38 people who sat down on the steps of the building their rights and gently scooped them up and carried them away into the building. In the end, the image left by the protest was not of an out of control police force that routinely files false warrants and affidavits, steals drugs and money from arrestees, beats up suspects and kills unarmed people. Instead, the Ramparts cops came off as restrained and even passive peacekeepers.

Leave it to the LAPD to mess up a rare opportunity for good press. As the protest at the Ramparts station fizzled out, the marchers regrouped and headed back toward the caged-in protest area near the Staples center in an attempt to distract attention from Joe Lieberman's acceptance speech—a speech that would echo Gore's call for 50,000 new cops and tougher police tactics nationwide. As demonstrators headed down Figueroa Street, they were met by a line of cops wielding riot clubs, who apparently wanted to keep the protesters from disturbing delegates who were then beginning to wander toward the convention hall.

After a short standoff, a wedge of about 20 cops suddenly charged the crowd, poking the frontline of demonstrators with their metallic batons, often aiming jabs at the solar plexus. Six or seven people fell to the pavement where they were beaten. Three of the fallen were women. One of the women was a sound technician for CNN. The cam-

eraman videotaped the beating, which soon broadcast on Larry King. King confronted a spokesman for the LAPD about the attack. The pr man apologized for the injuries sustained by the sound technician, saying: "Sometimes mistakes are made in the heat of battle." For his part, King evinced no concern for the other victims of the police who were as badly beaten as the CNN employee.

But there was no battle—only an unprovoked attack by police. "I was taking a drink of water when one of them hit me in the stomach with the tip of his baton," says "Cedar", a 20-year old student and Earth

What LA was about, in the end, was a continuity of resistance and dissent.

First!er from Eugene. "I couldn't breathe and I just dropped to the ground and this one cop kept flailing at me until three others pulled him off." No one had attempted to block access to the convention center. No one had tossed a water bottle at the police line. No one had thrown a brick through one of the windows of Cesar Pelli's garish Citicorp Tower. Of all of the police actions during the week, this one seemed the most likely to have been directed by the DNC itself, which did not want anything to delay or distract attention from the primetime roll-out of Lieberman.

LA wasn't Chicago 1968, though the LAPD did its best to emulate Daley's goons. For one thing, the convention itself had been

purged of dissent, the delegates were as programmed as a laugh track for a sitcom. Even liberal insiders were being shunted aside. Thursday night, just prior to Gore's speech: "Move out of the way, VIPs coming through," a burly cop screamed, emphasizing the point by throwing his elbows into the chests of Harold Ickes, former liberal adviser to Clinton, and CounterPunch editor Jeffrey St. Clair, who were penned against the fence while Hollywood director Ron Howard and his entourage passed through. "Times change, eh Harold?" said St. Clair. Half an hour later, Howard and others applauded wildly when Gore recounted his tour of Vietnam, vote for the Gulf War, tough stand on crime and role in dismantling welfare. There's not even much pretense left to the new Democratic Party.

It wasn't even the LA of 1960, when Adlai Stevenson's supporters and convention delegates rioted in what is now the parking lot/official protest zone of the Staples Center. What LA was about, in the end, was a continuity of resistance and dissent, a movement that exploded onto the scene in Seattle (as unexpected as the Zapatista uprising in Mexico in 1994) and resurfaced in DC during the IMF/World Bank protests and in Philly at the Republican Convention. Organized labor was absent, but here were all the others: the loosely knit of greens, peace activists, farm workers, public transportation advocates, working people angered at anti-labor free trade pacts, gays, lesbians and AIDS activists, death penalty opponents, and dozens of other groups and movements that collectively challenged Gore's Democratic Party. CP

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